

30 July 1947

INFORMAL MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF, IS/ORE

SUBJECT: Difficulties in Production of Situation Report of [REDACTED]

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25X1A 1. Work on subject paper was begun 10 February 1947 by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in the Western European Branch. They finished a draft on 10 March which was edited within WE.

2. The paper was seen by the Projects Division in this form and judged to be unacceptable in every way. As a first move toward improvement the Projects Division wrote an informal commentary intended to point out the main shortcomings in the paper and to suggest means of revising it. Something seems to have been done toward this end, but in any case the project was taken over by the newly-formed Northern Branch on about 1 April.

3. When the paper came to the Projects Division again, on about 7 April, the Projects Division decided to undertake a limited revision in an attempt to introduce clarity into a paper often incoherent to the point of incomprehensibility. It was understood that the Projects Division should make as few changes as possible, because (a) rewriting was not the function of the Projects Division, (b) it would be poor policy, and (c) there was the danger that the Projects Division might inadvertently pervert fact or interpretation. The Projects Division furthermore undertook the revision in constant consultation with the Northern Branch, whose wishes were deferred to as often as possible.

4. By June, the Situation Report satisfied the Chief, Projects Division, and though the Functional Branch was still not satisfied with the economics section, the paper was sent to the departmental agencies for informal concurrence in an effort to speed up the process of getting it out. Concurrence was promptly given.

5. In July, there were various other delays, incident to suggested changes, special work on economics, and a minor debacle in the typing department.

6. On about 24 July the paper was approved, with reservations, by the Chief, IS. It was forwarded to the Intelligence Advisory Staff on 25 July for formal concurrence.

7. The following general observations are offered:

a. The paper was originally written by people on the lower professional levels who had a very vague idea, if any, of what they were being called on to produce. Though they were given an outline, it

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25X1 was not an informative one, and it differed in some particulars from the check-list finally evolved. It is not altogether surprising, then, that the final product was little more than a rambling essay on [] scenery, history, and folkways. That it was badly written seems beside the point for the moment: had it been well written, it still would have borne little resemblance to a Situation Report.

b. The bad writing, however, became a stumbling block in another connection. When the original product had been revised by the Branch to the extent that it at least contained some SR material, someone still had the chore of trying to make better sentences out of bad ones and recognizable paragraphs out of incoherent ones. (This had to be done by "someone" because the originators of the paper seemed incapable of doing it.)

c. Under the circumstances, ^{the} one way in which the Projects Division could have brought into being a [] SR devoid of the fundamental weaknesses that all concerned have perceived in it, would have been to do the whole job over again, including primary research. You cannot make a diamond ring out of a piece of glass no matter how skillfully you cut it.

d. One further difficulty lay in the number of personnel involved in production: i.e., two analysts, one acting branch chief (not much concerned in this case), the members of the Projects Division, one ORR economist, one ORR scientist; an economist and a political man in State; more than one person respectively in G-2 and ORR; and the Chief, IS. It is natural that each of these people had his own ideas and made his own contributions to the paper. In general these were excellent contributions, but naturally many of them conflicted. For the Projects Division to harmonize the conflicts was not easy where so many points of view were involved. This process of incessant revision and compromise explains some of the paper's awkwardness and moments of seeming irrelevance. For one example of the conflicts that occurred (from the [] SR, as it happens), a sentence was rewritten by the Acting Chief, IS, exactly as he thought it should be. An ORR economist subsequently found this sentence manifestly unacceptable on grounds of literary style and changed it to something approximating the original.

e. Branch personnel then, as now, were too often in the dark as to (a) what would constitute an ideal SR, (b) what purpose SR's are intended to serve, and (c) what readers SR's are primarily intended for.

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Projects Division, IS/ORR

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